

Memo

To: Appropriations Committee
From: Robert J. Brothers, Jr., Executive Director
Date: February 14, 2013
Re: **HB 6350, AN ACT CONCERNING THE BUDGET FOR THE
BIENNIUM ENDING JUNE 30, 2015, AND OTHER PROVISIONS
RELATING TO REVENUE**

The Commission **OPPOSES** Section 11 of HB 6350, AN ACT CONCERNING THE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM ENDING JUNE 30, 2015, AND OTHER PROVISIONS RELATING TO REVENUE.

This section calls for the elimination of the Commission on Aging and the consolidation of the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women, Commission on Children, Latino and Puerto Rican Affairs Commission, African-American Affairs Commission, and Asian Pacific American Affairs Commission into a new Commission on Citizen Advocacy.

Connecticut has been a leader in the civil rights movement from the creation the Inter-racial Commission, now the Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities, in 1943 to Governor Ella Grasso's establishment of the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women in 1973 to the 1994 creation of the Latino and Puerto Rican Affairs Commission and in 1997 the establishment of the African-American Affairs Commission. Each one of these actions has been recognition by the political leaders of Connecticut that the issues of racism, intolerance and equal opportunity have not yet been achieved.

It was only four years ago that the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act was signed into law. Ledbetter only found out after her retirement that she had been significantly underpaid compared to her male counterparts. Beyond the years of lost wages her pension payments were lower than they should have been. Would the unfair treatment of women be protected without the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women? We know they would not.

We can look back to the insufferable abuse of Puerto Rican farms workers in "Tobacco Valley" from the 1950s and beyond and wonder how far we have really come. How far have we come when just over a year ago that East Haven Mayor Joseph Maturo, after four town police officers were arrested for allegedly mistreating Latinos, replied when asked "What are you going to do for the Latino

community today?" Maturo responded: "I might have tacos when I go home, I'm not quite sure yet." Would the vast majority of Connecticut citizens not been outraged without the Latino and Puerto Rican Affairs Commission? We know they would not.

Is the senseless killing of Trayvon Martin, a year ago this month, not a reminder that African-Americans continue to be targeted? Is the effort by this very legislature to rewrite the Alvin Penn Act not a reminder of current discrimination right here in Connecticut? Would these issues be as front and center without the African-American Affairs Commission? We know they would not.

To disband these three commissions, in particular, is to pretend that injustice has been overcome and that nothing bad has happened to women, Latinos or African-Americans in a very long time. We all know that it not true.

While we urge rejection of Section 11 in its entirety we plead with you to spare the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women, the Latino and Puerto Rican Affairs Commission and the African-American Affairs Commission from elimination as independent voices for groups that have been historically oppressed in Connecticut.